

1 2007-2008 Charter Review Commission Public Hearing

2  
3 MS. HAUGEN: Thanks for coming out  
4 tonight.

5 My name is Kirstin Haugen. And I'm the King  
6 County First District Charter Review member, so I'm  
7 really happy to be here and see a few other members.

8 We're going to start this evening out with a brief  
9 presentation talking about what the charter is, a  
10 little bit about the process. But I'd first like to  
11 introduce the other commissioners that are up here  
12 tonight to hear from you.

13 To my left is Mike Wilkins. Over to my right next  
14 to councilman Bob Ferguson, is Lois North, who is a  
15 co-chair of the commission, and she's also one of the  
16 original shareholders. It's wonderful to have her.  
17 Freeholder, same thing.

18 And on the second row, we have several members:  
19 Terry Lavender, Allan Munro, Gary Long, and Gregg  
20 Hirakawa.

21 And we also have commission staff members here who  
22 put this whole event together, and are going to be  
23 hosting nine meetings throughout the county. Mark  
24 Yango, Corrie Watterson -- our intern, Hong-Nhi Do,  
25 and Charlotte Ohashi over on the side.

1 I'd like to take this opportunity to also  
2 introduce Councilmember Bob Ferguson who is so  
3 wonderful to come out here tonight and listen to you.

4 Bob has the important role of actually making  
5 our recommendations a reality, so it's really neat for  
6 him to be here tonight. I'll let you have a few  
7 words.

8 MR. FERGUSON: Sure. Thanks,  
9 Kirstin.

10 I know that this group has an important function,  
11 a lot of important issues to look at for the charter.  
12 I'd like to add one very important one. That is,  
13 Kirstin used to work with me on the King County  
14 Council, and she left to go into the private sector.

15 So I'm hoping that perhaps you can add possibly  
16 bring her back to the King County Council and back to  
17 my office. We really miss her down there at the King  
18 County Council and the District 1 office where she  
19 served in my office in a number of capacities.

20 So we really miss her down there at King County  
21 Council, but I'm really excited she's now taking a  
22 lead role with this group and taking a look at the  
23 county charter.

24 I also want to thank all the folks who are on this  
25 body. It's important work. It's our constitution.

1 You know, it's the body that's our living document  
2 that we rely on for how we run our government. And I  
3 was chatting with Lois North just a few moments ago.  
4 And she talked about, I think, her first campaign in  
5 that role. I think you said it cost you just over a  
6 hundred dollars.

7 MS. NORTH: \$101.01.

8 MR. FERGUSON: That's what I told  
9 her. I think it's changed a little bit since then. I  
10 think you have to add a few zeros for how that works  
11 now.

12 But it's great to see both ends of the spectrum in  
13 terms of folks who have a commitment to King County  
14 government. You have folks like Lois North, who have  
15 been there from the very beginning, and folks like  
16 Kirstin, who are the next generation, who have come  
17 along, and everybody in between.

18 I think that's what's really inspiring about the  
19 process, is that we have input and leadership from all  
20 ages and all perspectives for the King County Charter.

21 And it is particularly important. I've only been  
22 on the King County Council for three and a half years,  
23 but in that time, just as drove up here, I thought  
24 about two very high-profile, important issues that  
25 came up before the King County Council.

1           In one case of the voters, that dealt directly  
2       with our county charter, whether or not we should have  
3       an elected Elections Director for the King County  
4       government. And whether the King County Council  
5       itself, decides the King County Council, whether there  
6       should be thirteen members or nine.

7           Both those issues go right to the core of county  
8       government, and has been an existing topic on the King  
9       County Council, in the very brief time that I've been  
10      on, just in the last three and a half years. So from  
11      my standpoint, the role of this group is so key and  
12      having the public involvement as well.

13          So I really appreciate the interest in going out  
14      to all nine districts throughout King County to hold  
15      these public meetings. This being the first one, I  
16      believe. And I know it's being televised on King  
17      County TV. And so I hope as we get a chance to move  
18      around to the other districts as well that we hear  
19      more and more from the public.

20          I think that's really key to reaching out to  
21      all -- geographically -- to all parts of King County  
22      government, to hear from all parts of the folks who  
23      live in King County.

24          So, again, thank you very much. I really  
25      appreciate all that you're doing for King County.

1 It's a critical process. And it will be the first  
2 time I have a chance as a King County Councilmember to  
3 review the recommendations from this body, and I'm  
4 really looking forward to it, as are all my  
5 colleagues. So thanks, again, very much.

6 MS. HAUGEN: As you probably know,  
7 the King County Charter is the constitution for King  
8 County government. So every ten years, the citizens  
9 are tasked with reviewing the county charter and  
10 making recommendations to make it better.

11 So we're in the beginning of our outreach process.  
12 It's our first meeting, and we'll be doing outreach  
13 all summer long. And so I just want to let you have  
14 the opportunity to give your recommendations, give  
15 your ideas -- no idea is too big at this point. So  
16 we'll welcome everything we can hear.

17 Just some background: There's 21 commission  
18 members throughout the whole county. They're from  
19 varied backgrounds, varied ages. A wonderful group  
20 put together by King County Executive, Ron Sims. And  
21 if you can read the small print, you have amazing  
22 eyesight.

23 The main point of tonight, is really to hear from  
24 you. We've reached out to several organizations  
25 throughout the county. I think it's over 300 --

1 different neighborhood groups, different groups  
2 representing labor, to the environment and so on --  
3 city council, chambers, tapped their input.

4 But it's also really important that we hear  
5 directly from citizens that might not be affiliated  
6 with a group. So this is really your chance. And  
7 we're glad that you can make it.

8 Now, I'd like to turn to Mark Yango who is going  
9 to give just a general overview of the charter review  
10 process and let you know some of the issues that might  
11 be of interest to you that you can speak on tonight.

12 MR. YANGO: Hello all. My name is  
13 Mark Yango. I am the Charter Review Coordinator. And  
14 I provide support and staffing for the commission.  
15 And I just wanted to -- I mean, our main purpose here  
16 tonight is to hear from you, to hear about your  
17 issues. But I also wanted to frame the discussion, to  
18 give you a bit of background about the charter review  
19 process and King County in general.

20 So just in this slide, I wanted to point out how  
21 large King County is. It reaches from Shoreline all  
22 the way down into Enumclaw, from Vashon Island to the  
23 foots of the Cascades. So we have a large group of  
24 people that we're going to be outreaching to within --  
25 like they said, we're going to be holding nine public

1 meetings throughout all nine Council districts.

2 We provided a wealth of literature on the tables  
3 over there so that can talk about some of the  
4 departments, some of the service we provide in both  
5 the rural and unincorporated areas. So I won't go in  
6 depth in some of these slides. I'll let you read that  
7 at your leisure.

8 But what I did want to point out is King County  
9 government maintains seven departments. It employs  
10 roughly 15,000 people, and is led by is 13 elected  
11 officials, which doesn't include the court system. I  
12 believe there are 72 judges within the district and  
13 superior court.

14 But outside of that the King County Government  
15 elected officials are comprised of King County  
16 Executive Ron Sims, King County Council, which is nine  
17 members, including Councilmember Ferguson, Assessor  
18 Scott Noble, Sheriff Sue Rahr, and the prosecuting  
19 attorney's office, where the late Norm Maleng -- his  
20 interim -- the prosecuting attorney is going to be in.

21 Now, what is the King County Charter? Like  
22 Councilmember Ferguson said, it is our constitution.  
23 All county government laws and actions must be  
24 consistent with the charter. But the charter is a  
25 creature of the state, so federal and state laws do

1       supersede the Charter, and they cannot come into  
2       conflict with those laws.

3           The Charter, I'd like to point out is also almost  
4       40 years old today. And it has withstood the test of  
5       time with relatively few changes, so it's a very sound  
6       document. It's a living document. And we're here to  
7       listen to you to make improvements on the life of the  
8       Charter.

9           So what is a Charter issue? There are three main  
10       criteria for what constitutes a Charter issue. First,  
11       it can only be a Charter-only solution, so it can only  
12       be resolved -- Charters can only best be resolved by  
13       changing the Charter, and it cannot be changed by  
14       ordinance or administrative action. So it has to be a  
15       Charter-only solution.

16          Secondly, it has to exist over the long term. It  
17       can't be something changed through a specific  
18       immediate concern. And, lastly, Charter issues have  
19       to address our core values, things that have to do  
20       with checks and balances, accountability, and merit.

21          Some past Charter amendments from -- anywhere from  
22       reducing the size of the King County Council from  
23       thirteen to nine, which was passed by the people in  
24       2000, all the way down to updating the county's  
25       anti-discrimination provision, are things that can be



1 Charter amendments, that have been Charter amendments  
2 in the past. But these examples just provide a frame  
3 of reference, and they don't suggest that current  
4 consideration is limited to just these issues. Okay?  
5 We just wanted to give you a sense of the breadth of  
6 what types of issues are out there.

7 In terms of the history of the Charter, this  
8 slide, I just want to basically point out the Charter  
9 was adopted by King County freeholders in May of 1969.  
10 And here we are today in 2007 and 2008, holding the  
11 5th Charter Review Commission. So you'll notice all  
12 of the other four commissions in there and then some  
13 of the more controversial amendments that have been  
14 passed.

15 Now, there are three separate ways where the  
16 Charter can be amended. First, through the Charter  
17 Review Commission, what we're doing here. The Charter  
18 Review Commission is going to be reviewing all the  
19 issues from the public and community groups. Then  
20 they'll send their amendments to the Council and the  
21 Council has the authority to approve or not approve  
22 some of the amendments to go onto the ballot. And if  
23 they are approved, the voters will get a say in  
24 November of 2008.

25 Second, the County Council has the authority to

1 actually initiate their own Charter amendments, which  
2 I believe, Councilmember Ferguson, needs to be  
3 approved by a majority vote within the Council and  
4 then those amendments, if they are approved, will go  
5 directly to the ballot.

6 And finally, citizens have a citizen's initiative  
7 process where amendments can go directly to the  
8 ballot. I can't recall what percentage, but  
9 signatures need to be on a petition to get it passed,  
10 but that is another vehicle for Charter issues to get  
11 onto the ballot.

12 Finally, the public's role in the process. This  
13 is just our timeline in our work program. So through  
14 February of '07 to August '07, we're gathering the  
15 issues, listening to community groups. So far, we  
16 listened to four community groups. We listened to the  
17 legal and the voters, the Municipal League, the  
18 Suburban Cities Association, and the unincorporated  
19 areas councilman, and we'll be listening to a lot more  
20 groups.

21 But this is our opportunity to listen to the  
22 public, so that will occur until August. And from  
23 September to February, September '07 to February '08,  
24 we'll deliberate on the issues, prioritize the issues,  
25 form subcommittees, and make Charter amendments.

1       The public will have another comment period in  
2       March and April of '08 to give feedback on the  
3       amendments that were created by the commission. And  
4       finally, we'll transmit the final report and  
5       recommendations to the Council at the end of May 2008.

6       Now, just to give you a sense of what sort of  
7       issues we've been hearing from some of the groups and  
8       citizens in other community groups, those things that  
9       we've heard were appointed versus elected positions,  
10      reforms to our electoral system, establishing a true  
11      initiative process, changes or improvements to our  
12      land-use policy, how to improve local services within  
13      the unincorporated areas, and whether or not to have  
14      partisan versus non-partisan elected positions.

15      So now I'm going to turn it over because we need  
16      your input now to testimony. I wanted to go over a  
17      couple of questions to help you think about the  
18      Charter.

19      So first question, "What major regional issues  
20      need to be addressed now, and over the next 10 years"?

21      Second question, "How can King County government  
22      simultaneously meet the needs of both urban and rural  
23      residents"? And "Should its role evolve over the next  
24      decade"?

25      And lastly, "King County seeks to be accountable,

1 efficient, effective, and fair government for its  
2 residents. Is it living up to these standards"?

3 So some questions to frame the discussion. We're  
4 going to get started in a few moments with public  
5 testimony, but when you come up to the microphone, can  
6 you just give us your name, what city or neighborhood  
7 you're from, and your comments.

8 Kirstin, how long do you want the testimony to be?  
9 About three minutes? We'll be timing three minutes  
10 and if you are not comfortable coming up to the mic,  
11 you can also fill out the comment cards or you can  
12 actually e-mail us, send your comments over the Web or  
13 call me. Okay? Thanks.

14 MS. HAUGEN: Can Chris Eggen come to  
15 the front?

16 MR. EGGEN: My name is Chris Eggen  
17 and I live in Shoreline and I wanted to speak on two  
18 issues quickly.

19 The first issue is elected versus appointed  
20 officials. I strongly believe that King County should  
21 have an elected auditor. The elections process has  
22 become a very important and visible process in King  
23 County, and it is something that the people should  
24 have a direct say on. So that's an opinion.

25 The second thing I would like to speak on is,

1 campaign finance reform. All of the campaigns in  
2 Washington that I've heard about, the cost is just  
3 climbing year after year. At some point, the average  
4 person simply won't be eligible for most offices.  
5 They won't have the time to raise money. They won't  
6 have the wherewithal to raise money and challenge an  
7 incumbent, for example.

8 I strongly believe that the only thing more  
9 expensive than reforming the finance system and having  
10 public funding of elections is not doing so. And I  
11 strongly endorse that idea.

12 MS. HAUGEN: Next up is Elaine  
13 Phelps.

14 MS. PHELPS: My name is Elaine  
15 Phelps, and I live in Shoreline. There are two issues  
16 also that concern me. One I've already raised, but I  
17 wanted to bring it up here in public. Many of you may  
18 not know that there was an election in February for  
19 the King Conservation District.

20 And something like one one-hundredth of one  
21 percent of King County voters voted on it. This is an  
22 organization that is responsible for millions of  
23 dollars of public money. And no one knew about this.  
24 We had a place to vote in Shoreline, and one in  
25 Seattle, one in, I think, Enumclaw, and about three

1 other places throughout the county.

2 That's for a million voters. This is not right.

3 And this is a legislative matter, and what I would  
4 like to see is the county, King County Council, to  
5 pursue this with the legislature, it's a legislative  
6 matter, about funding these elections because in order  
7 to vote to put them on the King County ballot would  
8 cost the conservation district something like a  
9 million dollars. They were told, or I was told that  
10 was the fee, which, of course, is like one-third of  
11 their budget of a fifth of their budget. They can't  
12 afford that.

13 They need to be included in the regular ballot. I  
14 bet there's not a person other than perhaps my husband  
15 and I and one other who has voted in that election  
16 including councilmembers.

17 Wonderful. And that's -- Shoreline had a much  
18 better turn out, though, but, anyway, given the amount  
19 that was there. And thanks to Janet Way that we had  
20 some information.

21 The other issue I would like to speak about -- and  
22 I have already raised this issue with Councilmember  
23 Ferguson, and they've done a good job in routing me to  
24 where I can get some information, but I want this to  
25 be a council matter, council issue, with the

1 legislature. You do lobby the legislature, don't you?

2 And the other is about the sheriff. I am very --  
3 I won't say ignorant, but I'm not as intimately  
4 acquainted with the affairs of the sheriff's  
5 department, but I am very, very concerned when we have  
6 elections for sheriff.

7 This, in my opinion -- we used to have a sheriff  
8 under the executive, and while that has some problems  
9 too, one of the things that I don't want, I really  
10 don't want an independent sheriff. I want a sheriff  
11 who is answerable, not at the next election, but  
12 currently.

13 So that when the sheriff department has problems,  
14 I'm not talking about the sheriff in particular, but  
15 when the whole department has problems, which they do  
16 have as a holdover, I think, from the previous sheriff  
17 who was elected, I think that we need to have  
18 immediate response from the executive.

19 And I think there have to be some limits and  
20 boundaries put upon the executive ability to deal with  
21 the sheriff, I think, because we don't want one-man  
22 rule in this county, but I think it's really essential  
23 that we do have a non-elected sheriff. Thank you.

24 MS. HAUGEN: Thank you. Is Robert  
25 Ransom interested in speaking?

1                   MR. RANSOM: Yes.

2                   MS. HAUGEN: You checked maybe, so  
3 I'm bringing you up here.

4                   MR. RANSOM: Robert Ransom, city of  
5 Shoreline.

6           The elections office, I think, is one that  
7 probably should be the elected position. I've had  
8 mixed feelings with regard to the sheriff's office. I  
9 used to work for the sheriff's. I used to work for  
10 King County personnel and did the civil service, as  
11 well as the King County personnel system. I have  
12 worked with both systems.

13           But I really think there are overriding concerns  
14 that make the office one that I think should be  
15 working under the county executive rather than being  
16 elected office. And many of the problems we had back  
17 in the 70s were because it was an elected office and  
18 certain patronage and other things that was going on.

19           Now, I think it's more susceptible to those kind  
20 of problems that we've had in the past as an elected  
21 office, so I would strongly suggest that it be an  
22 appointed position under the executive again.

23           With regard to County Council positions, although  
24 I have been in a nonpartisan position and others have,  
25 I think that there are advantages to being in the



1     partisan system.

2             You have caucuses, you have certain other rules  
3     that apply to you that are different than in a  
4     nonpartisan office. I would suggest that you keep the  
5     partisan offices at the county level. So I would  
6     recommend that you keep that and these, I think, are  
7     the three key issues that are coming up.

8                     MS. HAUGEN: Do you have a question?

9                     THE PUBLIC: Could I ask you to  
10    clarify? Were you saying that the sheriff should be  
11    appointed, and the elections person should be elected?  
12    Could you clarify?

13                    MR. RANSOM: That is correct.

14                    THE PUBLIC: Okay. Thank you.

15                    MS. HAUGEN: I'll repeat the  
16    question. You just asked for clarification on his  
17    comments?

18                    THE PUBLIC: Yes.

19                    MR. RANSOM: Okay. Anything else?

20    Thank you.

21                    MS. HAUGEN: Oh. Did you want to  
22    repeat?

23                    MR. RANSOM: Do I want to repeat  
24    what?

25                    MS. HAUGEN: Repeat your comments,

1       so everyone can...

2           I think you said that the elections auditor should  
3       be elected.

4                       MR. RANSOM: Well, I didn't call it  
5       the auditor because we have a different person with  
6       the title of King County Auditor.

7                       MS. HAUGEN: Sorry. The Elections  
8       Director.

9                       MR. RANSOM: The Elections Director  
10      should be elected in my opinion. The sheriff should  
11      be an appointed police chief under the county  
12      executive. And as far as the County Council  
13      positions, I am suggesting that they should remain  
14      partisan positions.

15                      THE PUBLIC: Kirstin, is this the  
16      same Rob Ransom as mayor of Shoreline?

17                      MS. HAUGEN: I believe so.

18                      Juli Pettingill?

19                      MS. PETTINGILL: Hi. My name is  
20      Juli Pettingill. I live in the University District.  
21      And I think we should have an elected Elections  
22      Director, but there's an initiative out right now I25  
23      that I think is going to get enough signatures to get  
24      on the ballot, and so I wouldn't want anything to  
25      interfere with that. If there are enough ballots,

1       sorry, signatures for the ballot. Other than that I  
2       don't really have any other comments.

3                       MS. HAUGEN: Elizabeth Walter.

4                       MS. WALTER: No comments.

5                       MS. HAUGEN: No, you won't be  
6       commenting. Well, I think we've gone through everyone  
7       who agreed to sign in. Is there any others that would  
8       like to make comments?

9       Sure. Come on up.

10                      MR. CHARNLEY: My name is Donn  
11       Charnley, a resident of Shoreline for about close to  
12       50 years.

13       And I have a feeling I'm preaching to the preached  
14       or whatever the saying is. You know, it just amazes  
15       me there's so few people here today. I recognize you  
16       probably picked this room because it seems to work  
17       well, but I think it's a shame. It's just an  
18       expression of what we had in the last election that  
19       Elaine just mentioned.

20       I didn't come with any issues in mind, but I was  
21       well stimulated by the first speakers, and I'd like to  
22       make a couple of points on theirs.

23       First of all, electing the sheriff has been  
24       something I thought was a noble act when the first  
25       Charter was passed. We created that office as an

1 appointed office by the Council under the executive's  
2 office, and took the politics out of a very sensitive  
3 area.

4 And I agonized when there was the move and,  
5 obviously, successful by initiative to change that to  
6 an elected position. I would suggest that this is one  
7 of the bullets that needs to be bit, bited? -- and  
8 that we resume and go back on that.

9 And it won't be popular, because everybody says,  
10 Oh, I want to have my say. Well, you have your say,  
11 you elect people. There's many people in here that I  
12 recognize, including my dear friend, Lois, that I know  
13 very well. That's why you elect people, is to make  
14 decisions.

15 Campaign finance that Chris brought up. I'm not  
16 alone in this in this room, in having to have raised  
17 increasing amounts of money every two years I ran for  
18 the legislature over 14 years. And even the last time  
19 I was agonized over the amount that I raised and  
20 spent, and I lost that election.

21 You know, it's just it is not conducive to the  
22 type of government we want to have, to democracy. And  
23 the precinct attempts in Olympia, I was saddened there  
24 that none of them, including the judicial one, we had  
25 excellent reasons for at least making public financing

1       judicial.

2           And even the one I thought would go through  
3       without any trouble because King County and Seattle  
4       both had public financing many years back, and it  
5       worked. And it worked very well. It isn't a mandated  
6       thing, for those of you who have never seen this  
7       before, it's a choice. But it would do so much and  
8       now there are three states, I believe, at least three  
9       states, and a number of other entities throughout this  
10      country that are doing this. I would like to see us  
11      certainly do that. We have to get the legislature to  
12      allow us to do it quote, unquote, the point was made,  
13      but let's work on that, please.

14           I don't know a lot about electing the Director of  
15      Elections. I've been a King County election official  
16      for the last 15 years. I've been a troubleshooter,  
17      and had worked on the recounts and things like that.  
18      And, yeah, we've had some problems. And I don't blame  
19      that or lay that at the feet of the fact that we had  
20      an appointed official rather than an elected one.

21           And I am very nervous of electing somebody who's  
22      going to be in charge of elections. And so that puts  
23      the wrong twist on it. I would urge deep caution in  
24      that if we even consider it at all.

25           And finally the partisanship. I had the pleasure

1 of going to graduate school in Minnesota back in the  
2 60s, and I discovered to my amazement that the  
3 legislature, Lois, was nonpartisan. And, you know,  
4 that's about -- I discovered that to be about as phony  
5 a thing as you could ever expect.

6 Everybody knew that the liberal group were the  
7 democrats and the conservative group were the  
8 republicans. And as any elected official, you have to  
9 have somebody in charge, and that's the majority. And  
10 so it was either the republicans with a cloak over  
11 their heads that said conservative or the liberals.

12 I think that's phony. I just don't like  
13 nonpartisanship at the level that we are talking  
14 about, certainly the state, and even at the King  
15 County level.

16 Yes, Bob, in areas that's towns and cities and so  
17 forth, that does make sense, and it seems to work very  
18 well, but I would urge great caution in considering  
19 making the King County nonpartisan.

20 I appreciate your listening and my opportunity to  
21 come and speak and see some dear old friends again.  
22 Thank you very much.

23 MS. HAUGEN: Thank you.

24 Sandra Cohen, are you interested in speaking?

25 MS. COHEN: Thank you all for taking

1 your time as citizen volunteers to hold this public  
2 meeting and the others that I know you are all going  
3 to go to.

4 I'm Sandra Cohen. I live in District 1 in the  
5 north part of the city of Seattle. For more than  
6 20 years, I worked for local governments at the county  
7 and at the city levels. I saw a lot of very dedicated  
8 people, both the elected officials and the staffs who  
9 work for them.

10 In some of those positions, I served elected  
11 officials who were nonpartisan, and in others, I  
12 served those who are elected through their party  
13 allegiance. Each has its flaws, but I will say I have  
14 never seen any real good in terms of responsiveness to  
15 citizens come from the party system.

16 What I have seen, and what I think we should at  
17 least ask the citizens if they want to change is,  
18 trade-offs being made, not because they're good, or an  
19 ordinance is a good one to vote for the citizens that  
20 a person represents, but rather because it's expected  
21 because of the party to which that legislator belongs.  
22 I don't think the citizens are well served by that.  
23 At least, I ask that you strongly consider putting  
24 before the voters this crucial and important question.

25 The County Council has edged close in the past to

1 putting this on the ballot for Charter amendments, but  
2 has never quite gotten there. And I hope that you'll  
3 have the courage this time, Bob and your colleagues,  
4 to at least ask the citizens so we can have an  
5 informed debate, and then let the citizens make that  
6 decision.

7 Lest you all think that I'm some kind of  
8 lunatic-fringe populist, however, my second issue that  
9 I would like to raise with you is, that I wish you  
10 would consider taking us back to the days before a  
11 court decision said that our Charter can be amended  
12 through the initiative process.

13 We use to think it was very clear in the Charter  
14 that it could not be amended by initiative. We've  
15 since learned otherwise through a state Supreme Court  
16 decision.

17 A Charter should be more difficult to amend than  
18 simply the making of a law through the initiative  
19 process that takes one vote of the people and maybe  
20 I'm just -- I've seen a lot of local government. I've  
21 seen the winds of change come through. I think the  
22 Charter should be insulated from those temporary  
23 public passions that sometimes sweep through a  
24 community.

25 Then one little, perhaps more technical issue that



1 I haven't heard mentioned yet. There are these very  
2 important bodies called regional committees that were  
3 established when Metro Transit and water quality  
4 functions were merged into county government. I have  
5 not seen the regional committees evidencing as much  
6 strength as they perhaps should have and could.

7 Particularly, I think it would be important to  
8 strengthen the role of cities and towns on the  
9 transit, the Regional Transit Committee, because for  
10 all of us who live in the urbanized parts of the  
11 county, transit is perhaps the most important function  
12 day to day that we receive from our county government.

13 Our interests in the denser parts of the county in  
14 transit and in service are very important and are  
15 really only represented at the county level through  
16 this, the regional committee, and, of course, through  
17 our district representatives, but they represent  
18 districts that typically are a mix of urban and less  
19 developed areas.

20 So I would like to see some thought given, at  
21 least, to whether the Regional Transit Committee could  
22 have a stronger role so that the city and town  
23 representatives there have a stronger voice.

24 Thank you.

25 MS. NORTH: Kirstin, might I ask

1 Sandra a question before she leaves?

2 MS. HAUGEN: Of course.

3 MS. NORTH: I just want to say that  
4 the comments tonight have been on an extremely high  
5 level. The audience is well-informed and knows what  
6 they're talking about. It's been very impressive.

7 And Sandra, you brought up the feeling that you  
8 didn't approve of the amendment process of the Charter  
9 by citizen initiative, right?

10 MS. COHEN: Right.

11 MS. NORTH: Let me say something to  
12 you. The way it has been in the past, the County  
13 Council sits there at the gate. They are the  
14 gatekeepers.

15 I've served on another Charter Review Commission,  
16 as well as one of the original freeholders to draft  
17 the county Charter -- not freeloaders, but  
18 freeholders, to draft the county Charter, and it is  
19 extremely frustrating to spend a year -- a group of  
20 citizens studying, working, taking testimony,  
21 investigating, and then finally to go through the very  
22 difficult process of consensus, which is hard, and it  
23 will be hard for our commission because our 21 people  
24 span the whole political spectrum in political  
25 philosophy, and it's not going to be easy to finally

1     get together and jell a recommendation on a few big  
2     items.

3           Okay. We finally achieve this, we present it to  
4     the Council, and they put it in the deep freeze. And  
5     they're not even going to consider anything with a  
6     great deal of merit to it. What has happened in the  
7     past is, you get little nitty-gritty housekeeping  
8     things that are put on the ballot for approval, but  
9     the really big policy issues, do they get out there?  
10    No.

11           And so I was dumbfounded when the state Supreme  
12    Court issued that opinion. That you could amend the  
13    county charter by initiative. That is not what the  
14    freeholders intended when we drafted it, but that's  
15    the court decision, and it stands.

16           And I'm sure that our commission will want to take  
17    a look at that because we need to examine how large  
18    should the required member signatures be, how does it  
19    compare with state law and other counties, and so on.

20           But I just want to say to you that that has been  
21    the frustrating thing in the past, because in Pierce  
22    County, for instance, when the charter commission  
23    makes a recommendation, it automatically goes on the  
24    ballot.

25           Yes, they report to the executive in the County

1 Council, but bango it goes on the ballot. But, of  
2 course, the Pierce County commission has to run and be  
3 elected countywide. And the legal interpretation has  
4 been that that is necessary if you are going to have  
5 something automatically on the ballot.

6 And I don't think most of the Charter Review  
7 Commission would relish running countywide to do the  
8 job of reviewing the county charter. So that's a very  
9 practical matter there. But do you see the difficulty  
10 of not having that process open? Because there the  
11 Council sits, and they can say, No, we're not going to  
12 put this on the ballot.

13 MS. COHEN: I share that  
14 frustration. Thank you for describing it.

15 It has been a number of years since the issue of  
16 putting the partisan/nonpartisan question, for  
17 example, on the ballot has been talked about, and the  
18 Council has never gone there, and that frustrates me.

19 However, I think there are two other approaches  
20 that would not make such a radical change to the  
21 charter that it would risk being amended as often as,  
22 for example, the state tax laws are amended during the  
23 initiative process.

24 One is, I'm not aware of a court decision, perhaps  
25 it's a lawyer's interpretation that has perhaps

1 chilled the notion of having the official Charter  
2 Review Commission's recommendations carry some special  
3 weight. Perhaps it could almost be like the regional  
4 committees, where the charter would say the regional  
5 commission can make five suggestions, let's say, that  
6 are in a special category. And that special category  
7 is one that unless you get, say, seven of the nine  
8 County Councilmembers voting against it going on the  
9 ballot, it goes on the ballot.

10 You know that might -- just to throw out some  
11 possibility that you have some special power as the  
12 Charter Review Commission. In the future, of course,  
13 under a charter change, that would have to be approved  
14 by the voters now.

15 And the other thing I guess I would say is, this  
16 is very much a representative democracy that we have  
17 with our County Council and if the issue is important  
18 enough to citizens, they will stand up at campaign  
19 events for the County Councilmembers and say, I  
20 challenge you, Candidate A, to tell us all here today,  
21 Are you going to vote to put X issue or recommendation  
22 from the Charter Review Commission on the ballot?

23 And if that becomes important enough to citizens,  
24 they will elect councilmembers who will put the  
25 important issues before them. Thank you.

1 MS. HAUGEN: Is there anyone else  
2 who would like to speak tonight?

3 Did you have a question?

4 THE PUBLIC: I've already spoken,  
5 but I have a question.

6 MS. HAUGEN: Oh, sorry. Well, go  
7 ahead with your question. Do you want to come up to  
8 the mic so we can get this on record? Thank you.

9 THE PUBLIC: Something I don't know  
10 and I need to know, for the initiative process for  
11 amending the charter, is it required to have the same  
12 requirements as amending the state constitution?

13 MS. NORTH: Is it required to what?

14 THE PUBLIC: To have the same  
15 provisions as amending -- the same requirements for  
16 amending the state constitution?

17 MS. NORTH: I'm not absolutely sure  
18 on that. I know that's one thing that our commission  
19 will be looking at.

20 THE PUBLIC: Because if we're going  
21 to proceed with initiatives, that should certainly be  
22 a consideration for -- because it is, the charter is,  
23 as you said, our constitution.

24 MS. NORTH: Yeah.

25 THE PUBLIC: And it should not be

1 trivial to amend it.

2 MS. NORTH: Very good point.

3 MS. HAUGEN: I saw a hand in the  
4 back. You, sir.

5 MR. DERDOWSKI: My name is Brian  
6 Derdowski. I live in unincorporated King County  
7 between Issaquah and Bellevue. First of all, thank  
8 you very much for your public service. It's important  
9 work. And I share the concern that Councilmember  
10 North raised about the County Council from time to --  
11 ignoring recommendations from the Charter Review  
12 Commission.

13 I was very troubled by that. I want to give you  
14 in kind of a rapid-fire fashion a whole variety of  
15 things that I think you might consider looking at and  
16 putting it into your pot of issues to consider.

17 First of all, with respect to the Charter Review  
18 Commission, you might consider a requirement that the  
19 Council has to take an affirmative vote. They have to  
20 actually put it on for action and vote it up or down,  
21 because as you know, the way to get rid of a fairly  
22 popular idea is just table it. And that's what the  
23 Council did on a variety of occasions.

24 Secondly, you might consider a super majority  
25 vote. I do believe in public -- the public being able

1 to by initiative alter their charter, but it ought to  
2 have a high threshold.

3 Thirdly, you might consider having a situation  
4 where the kickoff of the Charter Review Process review  
5 begins with an executive recommendation and a County  
6 Council hearing. Get it up to a high level right off  
7 the bat. Start getting those newspaper stories,  
8 start -- require a public hearing, then the Charter  
9 Review Commission can begin it's work.

10 The problem is the Charter Review Commission does  
11 all this work for a long time, it's kind of done in a  
12 low-profile way, and when it surfaces, there isn't  
13 enough time to really build that constituency.

14 Okay. Secondly, an issue that's near and dear to  
15 my heart is, that there is a patently unfair situation  
16 where councilmembers that represent incorporated areas  
17 strictly get to vote on ordinances that only have  
18 force and effect in an unincorporated area.

19 I think there's a one-person one-vote problem  
20 here, and it's something that just cries out for  
21 resolution. A smaller version of this, or another  
22 aspect of this is, that those County Councilmembers  
23 that represent unincorporated districts, get the same  
24 staff as those that represent incorporated districts.  
25 And we all know that the workload is a lot more, and



1     it puts those unincorporated councilmembers at a  
2     tremendous disadvantage on regional issues and other  
3     sorts of issues.

4           The next issues is ombudsman independent. The  
5     ombudsman is a critically important office. There  
6     ought to be a requirement that the ombudsman has a  
7     designated budget so the Council can't come in and  
8     tweak it and mess around with it.

9           I know from the time, from the years, that I  
10    served on the Council that -- well, I believe strongly  
11    that there was on occasion interference with the  
12    ombudsman's office investigations to some extent when  
13    they affected councilmembers. That's wrong. And  
14    there has to be independence. We can't have the  
15    ability to go in and squeeze their budget and affect  
16    their ability to do their job simply because we don't  
17    like what they're investigating.

18          So too the auditor. Okay. Now, people talk about  
19    the auditor as the election person. I'm talking about  
20    the auditor, that tremendous office that the  
21    freeholders and their wisdom created. The auditor  
22    that works within the legislative branch and has the  
23    authority to do performance audits and reviews of the  
24    executive branch.

25          That is very unusual. And I believe it's very

1 important that we maintain that auditor and make sure  
2 it has adequate funding to do its job. And that it  
3 also is distinguished from the election auditor. I  
4 share my friend, Senator Charnley's comment about  
5 being very concerned about having an elected election  
6 official.

7 The next issue is campaign finance reform. You  
8 know, the city of Seattle has a \$700 maximum  
9 contribution the City Council raises. The County  
10 Council is about 2,000, 2,100 or thereabouts, isn't  
11 it?

12 MR. FERGUSON: I think it's about  
13 1,400, I think.

14 MR. DERDOWSKI: Well, isn't it 1,400  
15 for the primary and 1,400 for the -- is it 1,400 for  
16 the whole cycle? I stand corrected.

17 It seems to me that the charter is a good place to  
18 have clear statements about conflicts of interest. So  
19 an official cannot vote on an issue that he or she has  
20 a conflict of interest, a personal conflict of  
21 interest.

22 So too, a lot of controls on lobbyists. If  
23 nothing else, simply clearer reporting, a mechanism to  
24 control the actions of lobbyists. Lobbyists -- are  
25 terribly -- are way, way too important at the King

1 County Council.

2 The prosecuting attorney. You know, the  
3 prosecuting attorney -- we think of the prosecuting  
4 attorney's office as the criminal -- on the criminal  
5 side in their activities -- on the criminal side, but  
6 we forget that the prosecuting attorney is also the  
7 civil attorney for the county.

8 I think, at one time there were -- when I was  
9 looking into this, there was about a thousand court  
10 cases involving the county on the civil side. And  
11 yet, it's not clear in all those cases who the client  
12 is.

13 I'll never forget when I was working on a problem  
14 in my district, and I talked to the head of  
15 planning -- you know, at that time Building and Land  
16 Development, and I said, Jeez, you know, why are we  
17 appealing this case? Because this case, the judge  
18 ruled that we had the authority to do that regulation.  
19 You wanted that authority, and why are you appealing  
20 it?

21 And the manager said, Jeez, Brian, I didn't know  
22 that we were appealing it.

23 I says, well, who's giving direction to the  
24 prosecuting attorney's office?

25 Well, they just automatically appealed. So I

1 requested that there be an audit done of the way in  
2 which -- I requested an audit and it was done,  
3 analyzing the way in which the prosecuting attorney  
4 reports to the client and works with the client.

5 That report had some very interesting findings,  
6 because, you know, do they take -- does the  
7 prosecuting attorney's office, if a department gets  
8 sued, is that department the client? Is the county  
9 executive the client? Is the corporate entity a  
10 client? Who's the client? And who is able to give  
11 direction to the PA's office?

12 In the absence of clear direction, it is a loose  
13 of -- it is a very loose situation, and it works very  
14 much to the detriment of the county. I spent ten  
15 years, literally -- you know, I served three terms on  
16 the Council. And I spent many years trying to get one  
17 list of all the court cases that the county was  
18 involved in. I could not get that list. I threatened  
19 having some university students create that list for  
20 public records. I did everything possible. And I  
21 don't believe there's such a list.

22 And how can you manage the workload? How can you  
23 look at the court cases and try to come to some  
24 determination of what the county should be doing to  
25 avoid a legal risk if you don't have the baseline

1 data? How well are we doing? Do we have a one loss  
2 percentage? I can tell you we are bleeding money.  
3 The county is bleeding money on human resources  
4 because the county is doing things to harm employees  
5 unnecessarily and costing money. So this issue is  
6 something you might wish to grapple with.

7 The next is emergency ordinances. The language is  
8 too broad. I know that the County Council from time  
9 to time adopted emergency ordinances because it wanted  
10 to avoid some sort of a referendum. It wanted to take  
11 action quickly. It wasn't really an emergency. And  
12 the public is getting wise to this. And what that  
13 means is when there is a true emergency, the county's  
14 moral authority to act is undermined. That's  
15 unfortunate.

16 There should also be a whistle-blower provision, a  
17 strong whistle-blower provision in code. What I mean  
18 by that is, every professional at King County should  
19 be allowed to speak the truth if they're asked at the  
20 County Council. The executive should not be able to  
21 say, You can't to talk to the county councilman.

22 You know, PEER, the public -- this one  
23 organization called Public Employees for Environmental  
24 Responsibility, did a survey some years ago of  
25 employees at the county's permitting agency. And I

1 don't remember the exact number, but it was on the  
2 order of magnitude of about 65 percent of the  
3 employees reported in a confidential survey that they  
4 at one time or the other had been coerced or pressured  
5 to take actions that they thought were unethical or  
6 contrary to the law.

7 65 percent. A huge number. And this is something  
8 that, you know, employees should be given their voice.  
9 And I think this can be done while still preserving  
10 executive progress.

11 Budget provisos, you know, the county sometimes  
12 tries to legislate through budget provisos. It's not  
13 clear to what extent those budget provisos are, you  
14 know, can be enforced. I think it is appropriate for  
15 the county to tie money to actions, but it's an area  
16 that wise heads should think about.

17 I thought about a number of ways this could be  
18 handled, but budget provisos is a gray area, and it  
19 kind of works now because the executive knows that if  
20 he goes too far in ignoring a budget proviso that his  
21 hand will get slapped in the future, and the Council  
22 knows that if they go too far or try to legislate  
23 through the budget, that the executive will blow them  
24 off and undermine their authority. So there is this  
25 kind of uneasy truth, but it really ought to be

1 specified.

2 Next, the hearing examiner. The hearing  
3 examiner's office is very, very important just like  
4 the auditor, just like the ombudsman, the hearing  
5 examiner should be, the independent should be  
6 preserved.

7 We had a county -- a hearing examiner that was  
8 starting to issue decisions that were somewhat in  
9 favor of the environment and neighborhoods in my  
10 judgement. And I started to see pressure exerted from  
11 my colleagues at budget time and in reviews of that  
12 person's work. That's unacceptable.

13 The next is -- and I'm getting near the end here  
14 -- and the reason I'm raising all these things is I  
15 understand what this hearing is for. This hearing is  
16 for, you know, kind of casting out a net and coming up  
17 with ideas. And I don't abuse this privilege and I do  
18 appreciate the privilege and would be happy to follow  
19 through with letters or any other correspondence.

20 The last couple things is the quorum issue. You  
21 know, when I first got to the County Council on  
22 occasion we would be conducting hearings without a  
23 quorum. And I'll never forget the first day, I looked  
24 around and I said, Jeez, you know, it just so happens  
25 that only a county councilmember can make a quorum

1 call. So it's perfectly lawful to conduct a hearing  
2 on an ordinance or a land use action with less than a  
3 quorum as long as no councilmember calls a quorum.

4 Well, by custom the County Councilmembers didn't  
5 call a quorum. Well, I did. And, of course, I was,  
6 you know, kind of punished for a number of months,  
7 but, you know, after a while nobody ever questioned  
8 it. If there wasn't a quorum, someone would look at  
9 me. They would know I would raise the issue, and then  
10 suddenly the Chair would stop and say, Okay, we're  
11 going to have a quorum.

12 Well, you know, I watch every now and then when I  
13 have the energy, I'll watch the county's actions, and  
14 I tell you they're conducting hearings without  
15 quorums. I wish there was one member on the Council  
16 that would never allow a hearing to happen, a lawful  
17 required hearing to happen, without a quorum. And all  
18 they have to do is raise their hand and say, I call a  
19 quorum, but since no one is doing that, it ought to be  
20 in the charter.

21 So too with executive sessions. Executive  
22 sessions should be taped, and a copy should be given  
23 to the prosecuting attorney's office. The first time  
24 I was in an executive hearing, executive session that  
25 strayed from the point and went into areas that it



1       shouldn't have -- this was after Councilmember North  
2       was there I might add -- you know, I stood up. I told  
3       my chief of staff, I said, You go get the PI. I'm  
4       leaving, I'm getting the Times. We're going to shut  
5       it down.

6           And, you know, it took me a couple of months to  
7       live that one down, but after a while no one ever did  
8       it. No one ever strayed from an executive session  
9       when I was on the Council. Not once. But they knew  
10      if it did, I'd blow the whistle on it.

11          Well, you don't have a guy that's willing to take  
12      swings and arrows all the time. So you have to have  
13      it in the charter.

14          As to partisan and nonpartisan, you know, I played  
15      a very controversial and pivotal role on an issue, and  
16      I want to apologize to Councilmember North who in good  
17      faith relied on me.

18          I was kind of a new councilmember, and I don't  
19      think I quite understood that it was a commitment, but  
20      she took it as a commitment that I would support a  
21      nonpartisan County Council. And, you know, it was  
22      with all the right intentions, but as a rookie mistake  
23      I started listening. I made that commitment to  
24      Councilmember North before I talked to lot of  
25      people -- before the hearing -- and I had a true

1 change of heart.

2       Unfortunately, it happened at the time where for  
3 me to do what I thought was the moral thing in my  
4 heart, it killed the -- that proposal. It went down  
5 in flames, and a couple of people that didn't really  
6 deserve it, got embarrassed.

7       So Councilmember North, for what it's worth -- we  
8 don't always have a chance to talk, but I want to tell  
9 you that I'm sorry, that it wasn't intended, but I did  
10 foul up your proposal. I think I made the right  
11 choice, though.

12       And the reason was, even though it was -- you  
13 know, wise people can differ -- even though the timing  
14 was awful, and I wish I had come to it earlier, but  
15 the voters know so little about the people that they  
16 vote for, that at least having the party affiliation  
17 on a piece of paper tells that them some very  
18 important things. And in the absence of that, I think  
19 you would basically have one party, and that would be  
20 the developer party. And you wouldn't necessarily  
21 know if they were a member of the developer party or  
22 not.

23       And so there it is. Thank you very much for this  
24 opportunity to address you, and thank you for the very  
25 important work you're doing.

1 MS. HAUGEN: Thank you.

2 MS NORTH: Kirstin, I just -- Brian,  
3 before you leave, you've given us a dazzling array of  
4 things to go through here. I am trying to take notes  
5 as fast as I can, but I am sure our reporter will have  
6 them all, and I'll be interested in seeing them.

7 One thing I want to say to you, your comments  
8 about the prosecuting attorney, by state law we, as a  
9 commission, cannot touch the office of the prosecuting  
10 attorney or the judges. That's out of our realm. So  
11 I just made a note of that, but we're not the avenue  
12 for anything doing with the prosecuting attorney.

13 MR. DERDOWSKI: You know,  
14 Councilmember, what I'm -- thank you very much. One  
15 thing you might consider doing, is you might ask the  
16 staff, I guess to ask for a legal opinion from them,  
17 you'll probably have to ask the AG's office, but the  
18 issue as to what you can do with the PA's office is  
19 one thing.

20 However, the issue of who represents the  
21 departments in civil matters and how that  
22 representation takes place, in other words, who calls  
23 the shots as to appeal or not or what the strategy is.

24 That issue is clearly in my view and in the  
25 legislative executive arena, and I think that that --

1     what you might do is, you might ask for a legal  
2     opinion from the AG's office as to whether a Charter  
3     Review Commission can address the nature of the  
4     representation and the direction given to the PA's  
5     office from those departments.

6             It's a little different. There may not be a way  
7     to do that, but it doesn't seem logical to me -- it  
8     just doesn't seem logical to me that you don't have  
9     the ability to address how departments conduct their  
10    and defend their legal actions.

11            And so that's a -- I know that's kind of a  
12    policy-want sort of thing, but it really is important.  
13    And it may be that the AG's office would identify in a  
14    letter an area that could be a good place for some  
15    legislation or a constitutional memo, because it just  
16    doesn't make sense that the client can't direct his or  
17    her attorney.

18                   MS. HAUGEN: Allan?

19                   MR. MUNRO: Yes. This is just for  
20    my own edification. One of the speakers, Juli  
21    Pettingill, mentioned an initiative, I25 is in  
22    circulation. What is it? I don't know what it would  
23    do, and I don't know whether it's directed at the  
24    county level, or it's more broadly directed at  
25    government.

1 THE PUBLIC: Is Juli here?

2 MS. HAUGEN: She spoke earlier.

3 MS. PETTINGILL: I don't know a  
4 great deal about it, but there's signatures going  
5 around to put it on the ballot.

6 MS. HAUGEN: Would you mind coming  
7 up -- I'm so sorry -- just so everyone can hear you on  
8 TV.

9 MS. PETTINGILL: There's Initiative  
10 I25 that's going around collecting signatures. I  
11 believe they need to collect those signatures by the  
12 22nd of this month to go on the ballot for elected  
13 director.

14 THE PUBLIC: For what?

15 THE PUBLIC: Is it state? Is it  
16 county?

17 THE PUBLIC: What is I25?

18 MS. PETTINGILL: Elected election  
19 director.

20 MS. NORTH: Just for King County.

21 THE PUBLIC: Okay.

22 MS. HAUGEN: Thank you. I saw a  
23 gentleman in the back.

24 MR. EARLY: My name is Mark Early.  
25 I live in Seattle, Washington.

1           Since I'm not nearly as knowledgeable as many  
2   other speakers, especially Mr. Derdowski, I will be as  
3   brief as possible.

4           One idea I would just throw out, would be to  
5   reduce the number of consultants that are members of  
6   government teams that are advising or controlling  
7   capital projects. Say, pick a number greater than  
8   five million dollars.

9           Oftentimes, it was kind of the point from talking  
10   to specialists in this area of construction, that the  
11   state department of transportation for the viaduct  
12   project at 80 percent of the members of their team  
13   looking for years on the project, working on the  
14   project, were actually members of really the big three  
15   consulting companies, Parsons Brinckerhoff and the  
16   rest, who were really, you know, financially their  
17   best interest was the most expensive possible project.

18          So 80 percent of the team working for the state,  
19   looking at this, were consultants whose companies  
20   would directly benefit by the most expensive project.

21          So perhaps something -- I don't know if it could  
22   be in the charter, but some way of encouraging the  
23   reduction of the use of consultants for certain size  
24   capital projects.

25          The other thing that possibly touches on elections

1 would be to allow online signing of citizens  
2 initiatives using a secure server technology, perhaps  
3 managed by the county. There are all kinds of  
4 technologies nowadays that really can ensure that one  
5 -- the person who says -- who essentially goes online  
6 and obligates themselves in some way really is who  
7 they say they are. Lots of different technology,  
8 being that people make purchases -- there's tens of  
9 thousands of dollars of purchases based on  
10 secure-server technology.

11 I would think that if we want to have greater  
12 access by the citizens to the election process, that  
13 might be one thing to consider, because right now it's  
14 really paid signature gatherers and only certain  
15 groups that can afford paid signature gatherers. And  
16 usually those involve special interests who will fund  
17 paid signature gatherers who seem to be able to  
18 control or take over the initiative process. I'd like  
19 to be able to make it a little more democratic.

20 The other thing would be to have you, perhaps  
21 consider looking at the -- something I saw probably  
22 about eight months ago, there was a seminar at the  
23 Evans' School of Government that was going over the  
24 history of the, I think, it was called the vision for  
25 Washington's future. It was undertaken in the early

1 1970s. It was absolutely -- I had no idea that this  
2 had occurred, but the more I learned about it, it was  
3 just absolutely fascinating.

4 And it involved hundred of volunteers who went in  
5 depth in looking at what perhaps should Washington's  
6 future really look like. And then that was expanded  
7 to include tens of thousands of citizens who responded  
8 to opinions, surveys that were published in local  
9 papers.

10 There were lots of town hall meetings, and it was  
11 really an astonishing, astonishing expression of real  
12 civic responsibility and public input in a process.  
13 And, unfortunately, it came at the tail end of Dan  
14 Evans' last term in office. And Governor Dixie Lee  
15 Ray, since it had been started by Dan Evans, she  
16 killed it. Anyway...

17 But it was really an amazing thing. And the Dan  
18 Evans School of Government has a whole bunch of  
19 information on that whole event and that whole  
20 process. You know, if you have a chance, it would be  
21 great to take a look at how that process -- some --  
22 you might be able to glean some aspects of that  
23 process that will be helpful.

24 Gosh, last but not least, two last things. I  
25 wasn't here -- a clear expression of perhaps a more



1 generous public disclosure laws.

2 Metro is often seen by friends of mine who are  
3 interested in issues around transportation, myself  
4 included, as being a rather impenetrable fortress.  
5 And they routinely make it extremely difficult to get  
6 any kind of information that they think might possibly  
7 have some impact on what they want to do or contrary  
8 to what they would like to do.

9 So even though we have State Public Disclosure  
10 laws -- I'm sorry. It's State Public Document laws.  
11 So, you know, we have certain state access or mandated  
12 state access to public documents for citizens.  
13 Oftentimes, the implementation of those are handled by  
14 departments in such a way that really renders them  
15 rather meaningless and impotent.

16 So I would say if there was a way in our charter  
17 that we could expand and add to the existing  
18 provisions that the state has, and make them even more  
19 generous to allow citizens access to the information  
20 that their departments generate, I think that would be  
21 a great thing.

22 Lastly, I apologize for coming late. So some of  
23 these issues may have been covered by somebody else or  
24 certainly someone may have mentioned a sunset law.

25 I would think that a way of reviewing county

1 department performance using some sort of sunset law  
2 provision would be -- would help encourage the average  
3 citizens to believe that government is doing a very  
4 difficult job. They're trying to do it in a dedicated  
5 fashion, and that -- but every once in a while someone  
6 looks over the shoulder of these departments and  
7 really does do a review. They say, Have they already  
8 accomplished most of their mission? And should we  
9 take those resources and those people and allow them  
10 to work on other very pressing needs?

11 I think that would help people feel that their  
12 government is more efficient, if there was some  
13 mechanism for reviewing the advocacy and the  
14 efficiency of departments within the county government  
15 on a regular basis.

16 Thanks very much.

17 MS. HAUGEN: Allan?

18 MR. MUNRO: Should -- this is  
19 addressed to the speaker.

20 MS. HAUGEN: Oh. Mark, could you  
21 come back?

22 MR. MUNRO: Provided it can be  
23 constitutionally done, should we attempt to prohibit  
24 the paying of solicitors to obtain signatures on  
25 initiatives.

1                   MR. EARLY: You know, I think if  
2   it's constitutional, I would be personally in favor of  
3   that. I would be personally in favor of that. I  
4   really don't think people should be paid to gather  
5   signatures for a host of reasons.

6                   MS. HAUGEN: Thank you.

7                   THE PUBLIC: Can I ask him a  
8   question?

9                   MS. HAUGEN: Sure. Go for it.

10                  THE PUBLIC: On that issue of pay,  
11   have you thought about the possibility of limiting  
12   solicitors -- paid or not, I'm not addressing that  
13   issue -- to only soliciting for signatures in the  
14   areas in which they are voters? That is, not  
15   importing gangs to come in and pay them to solicit,  
16   and it's not even their own state.

17                  MR. EARLY: I hadn't thought of that  
18   issue. I mean, I hadn't thought of that issue. I am,  
19   however, involved with a little group, Washington  
20   Public Campaigns, working on clean election reform  
21   similar to what's in Arizona and Maine. And someone  
22   in our group has actually looked at that aspect, and I  
23   will definitely try to learn more about it myself, and  
24   then maybe submit a written comment to the Charter  
25   Review Committee.

1                   THE PUBLIC: Is there an e-mail or a  
2 website for that?

3                   MR. EARLY: Yes. It is  
4 www.washclean.org.

5                   THE PUBLIC: Oh. That's you? I  
6 didn't know that.

7                   MS. HAUGEN: Is there anyone else  
8 who would like to give comments? Don't be shy. Oh  
9 good. Thank you.

10                  MS. KEMPF: I didn't come prepared  
11 with prepared remarks, but as somebody else said, I  
12 was inspired by all the great comments others made.

13                  MS. HAUGEN: Can you state your  
14 name, please.

15                  MS. KEMPF: I sure can. My name is  
16 JuliAnn Kempf, and I live in the Green Lake  
17 neighborhood of Seattle.

18                  One of the issues that was brought up, and it  
19 engendered some giggles, was the idea of an elected  
20 Elections Director. I think that some of the folks  
21 that oppose an elected Elections Director or an  
22 elected sheriff or an elected auditor may be operating  
23 under the assumption that appointing a position, as  
24 opposed to electing a position, takes the politics out  
25 of it.

1           And the simple fact of the matter is, you don't  
2           take the politics out of politics. There's always  
3           going to be an elected official responsible for any  
4           county governmental department.

5           The key question is -- I apologize -- the key  
6           question is: How many layers of bureaucracy do you  
7           want separating the people's choice, the person that  
8           the people have placed in office to be responsible for  
9           the functioning of that piece of county government --  
10          and the subject matter specialists, the technicians,  
11          and professional managers that actually run it?

12          The current setup with King County elections, for  
13          example, you have -- it's a vacant position, but you  
14          have a superintendent of elections who's tasked with  
15          actually running the elections office.

16          And that person is seven steps away from the  
17          elected official who actually is responsible for the  
18          performance of that office, who makes the policy for  
19          that office, and who most importantly can advocate for  
20          legislative issues about that office and for resources  
21          for that office.

22          I was superintendent of elections for four and a  
23          half years for King County. Guess how many  
24          face-to-face meetings I had with the elected person,  
25          who was responsible for elections, which would be the

1 county executive? That would be exactly zero.

2 So you've got a huge chasm between the people who  
3 are tasked with ensuring that those offices run well,  
4 and with the people who are tasked by the voters to  
5 make the decisions and get the resources to ensure  
6 that those offices can run well. And it's a very,  
7 very serious situation.

8 Personally, I firmly believe that the reason that  
9 Gary Ridgway was ultimately apprehended was because we  
10 did have a charter change in 1997, because the sheriff  
11 became an elected position, and because we elected a  
12 person who was able to advocate for resources to  
13 increase the activity of the Green River Task Force to  
14 work on some old evidence that they had, and to  
15 finally apprehend someone.

16 I personally believe that without that charter  
17 change, that Mr. Ridgway would still be at large  
18 today. And I grew up in that neighborhood so it was  
19 sort of a fairly-large issue growing up.

20 Having worked in the elections office, and moving  
21 onto another issue -- having worked in the elections  
22 office, I think that an important point was made about  
23 partisan affiliation with elected offices. Voters are  
24 hungry, desperately hungry, for information about  
25 candidates. So much so that every election season we

1 would receive dozens and dozens of requests from  
2 voters for us in the elections office to create a  
3 newsletter of staff picks, not wanting to trust  
4 campaign information or information put out by good  
5 government groups, they wanted us to go through, since  
6 we got to meet everybody as they came through during  
7 candidate filing, and say, Oh, yeah. We like this  
8 guy, this guy, this gal, this gal, this one, and this  
9 gentleman because they want to know more about the  
10 candidates, and they don't feel they can get that  
11 information. So they want somebody who knows more to  
12 make the pick for them.

13 One of the things that a partisan label, and, you  
14 know, we have to admit that it's a label, but one of  
15 the things that a partisan label does, is it does tell  
16 voters something about the philosophy of the  
17 candidate. So it is one piece of information that we  
18 would be taking from the voters in making those  
19 offices nonpartisan.

20 I couldn't agree more with the previous speaker  
21 who stated that a very clear expression of public  
22 disclosure laws in the county would be a welcome  
23 addition. The five day -- - currently county offices  
24 have a five-day period in which they must respond, but  
25 at the end of that five-day period under the state

1 disclosure law, you can respond with a letter stating,  
2 We need more time. And that amount of time is open  
3 ended. You can send a letter back saying, It will be  
4 responded to sometime in the middle of June 2010, and  
5 please let us know if you have any other concerns.

6 Most of it isn't quite as obvious as that, but one  
7 thing that does happen very frequently is that county  
8 offices will respond just a week or so after the point  
9 that that information becomes stale for the purposes  
10 of being able to testify at public hearings, put  
11 together any sort of opposition to something that  
12 might be proposed.

13 I also couldn't agree more with the former  
14 Councilmember Derdowski that there should be a strong  
15 whistle-blower law within county government. County  
16 employees must be protected for simply being able to  
17 tell the truth to a councilmember who stops them in  
18 the hall, to the next door neighbor who asks them how  
19 a project is going. It should never, ever, ever, ever  
20 be a disciplinary or a terminable offense for a county  
21 employee to tell the truth to their neighbor, to their  
22 elected councilmember, to a member of the press, to  
23 anyone.

24 MS. HAUGEN: Thank you.

25 MR. KING: My name is Richard King.



1 I live in the Ravenna neighborhood here in Seattle.  
2 And I'm another one of those people who definitely  
3 came here to listen and not to talk tonight. I got  
4 inspired by people. There are two things I'd like to  
5 echo.

6 And that I cannot believe that our County Council  
7 is allowed to operate without a quorum. I cannot -- I  
8 just cannot believe that we would allow that procedure  
9 to go on.

10 I also -- as a -- as somebody who was once upon a  
11 time in the military and punished from being a  
12 whistle-blower, I would like to say that I think it's  
13 very important that we do have very strong protection  
14 for whistle-blowers. I can't urge you strongly enough  
15 to implement that.

16 I would like to just also briefly address the  
17 issue that one of the previous speakers brought up  
18 about signature gatherers for initiatives and other  
19 processes. I don't like to see a lot of people from  
20 out of state flooding our city and county to gather  
21 signatures for initiatives.

22 However, I would urge you one caution in thinking  
23 about this. Please do not demand that signature  
24 gatherers have a designated place of residence. I  
25 work at the University District Youth Center. We have

1 a program for homeless young adults. Many of them do  
2 get paid -- I will admit, do get paid to gather  
3 signatures, but many of them also gather signatures on  
4 -- for a gratis on the issues that affect their lives.

5 They don't have a fixed place of abode, and to put  
6 in something in place that would prohibit them from  
7 gathering signatures would be a disservice. Thank  
8 you.

9 MS. HAUGEN: Thank you. I think we  
10 have time for one more comment if anyone would like to  
11 present. We'll bring you up again.

12 THE PUBLIC: You can't keep a good  
13 elected official down.

14 MS. HAUGEN: I think we've been  
15 honored by several former officials being here  
16 tonight.

17 MR. CHARNLEY: As I stated the first  
18 time I was up here, there's so many friends in the  
19 audience here that I've had the pleasure of working  
20 with, sometimes arguing against. It's old-home week.

21 This idea of unincorporated and corporated has  
22 sort of been in the back of mind all along because I  
23 chaired a local government committee in the house for  
24 some years, and one of the issues was: What do you do  
25 about an area that becomes dense enough in population

1     that the county where those people reside is  
2     hard-pressed to provide the kind of services that they  
3     need?

4           And, therefore, we did mandate and I can't  
5     remember the specifics anymore, but we did mandate  
6     that at a certain point. Those areas had to fish or  
7     cut bait. That means you got to join the city, or  
8     become one. And I lived in one of that sort,  
9     Shoreline.

10           And one of the reasons I supported the -- some of  
11     my neighbors didn't care for the incorporation of  
12     Shoreline -- is just that reason. That I wanted to be  
13     able to have a more localized area that I could turn  
14     to for concerns and needs and permits and so forth  
15     than the county itself, because I do believe that the  
16     county's primary responsibility is the unincorporated  
17     areas. They're the only government they have.  
18     There's no one else they can turn to.

19           And I just -- I don't know what the answer is to  
20     having a County Council that has to deal with the  
21     problems in the whole county including the very  
22     densely populated areas that already are cities. I  
23     don't have an answer for that. I keep puzzling over  
24     it. Should we say that the county does not have any  
25     function there and only in the unincorporated areas?

1 I don't think that's the answer.

2 But I wish you well with that kind of a question,  
3 and, again, thank you very much.

4 MS. HAUGEN: Thank you.

5 If any of you have comments and ideas that you  
6 come up with after the meeting, feel free to visit the  
7 website for the Charter Review. It's  
8 metrokc.gov/exec/charter. It's also on the last page  
9 of the packet that you may have picked up by the door.

10 Thank you so much for coming tonight. This is  
11 really helpful. I think we've set the bar for the  
12 next eight meetings we'll be going to. I think if we  
13 were to go into deliberations now, I think we'd be  
14 almost ready, so...

15 Thank you again for coming.

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